



# *Ridgefield Board of Education*

February 28, 2019

Education Committee  
Department of Education  
Connecticut State Capitol  
210 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

**Testimony for the Education Committee on March 1, 2019 re: the Governor's Bill - HB 7150  
from the Ridgefield Board of Education**

Dear Committee Members,

The Ridgefield Board of Education is grateful to the legislature for its ongoing support of education. The future prosperity of the State of Connecticut is built on the quality of education for our students. We understand our state is facing tough fiscal challenges and that agencies and programs are being asked to evaluate service levels and costs. However, the Governor's proposals for the future funding of Teacher Pensions in Connecticut will adversely impact the delivery of education to the children of our district. Additionally, this proposal will damage the provision of education in the state of Connecticut and will hurt towns as they strive to balance the needs of schools with other community services.

In Ridgefield, we are opposed to the demand from the Governor that we meet over 25% of the annual cost of the pension benefits for our certified staff. As a district that pays our staff above the median pensionable salary, we will incur additional costs under the proposal.

Staff salaries and benefits represent over 80% of the cost of the Ridgefield Public Schools. This increase in the costs Ridgefield taxpayers are asked to bear will lead to a reduction in the number of teachers employed to educate the district's children, and diminish the quality of education.

This proposal fails to address the fundamental problems with the current pension plan: underfunding, structural misalignment, and overly optimistic investment return assumptions. The proposal to distribute costs to the towns, without attempting to address any of these foundational problems of the current plan, does not offer a financial resolution to the taxpayers of Connecticut.

Further, Ridgefield residents have already contributed to the Teacher Pension Plan through the state income tax. This proposed change creates a second layer of taxation since the increase will be added to property taxes levied by the town.

This proposal unfairly shifts a state government responsibility unevenly to towns for no sensible or logical reason other than the state's inability to meet its obligations. We expect that the Governor and the legislature will understand the devastating impact this shift will have on the towns in Connecticut and their ability to educate students. Crippling town education budgets is not a reasonable path to a stable state budget.

Sincerely,

*Members of the Ridgefield Board of Education*

Margaret Stamatis, Chair	Carina Drake	Tracey O'Connor
Douglas Silver, Vice-Chair	Sharon D'Orso	Jonathan Steckler
Kathleen Holz, Secretary	James Keidel	Frances Walton